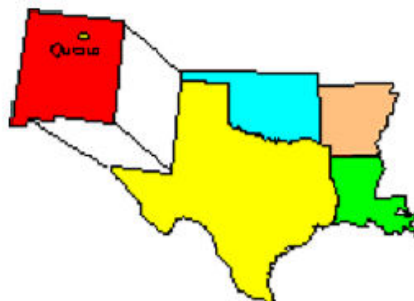


MOLYCORP, INC. (TAOS COUNTY) NEW MEXICO

EPA ID# NMD002899094
Site ID: 0600806



EPA REGION 6 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 03

Contact:
Mark Purcell 214.665.6707

Updated: September 2006

Current Status

A Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) is currently being conducted under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) at the MolyCorp site (Site) near Questa, NM. MolyCorp is performing the RI/FS in accordance with an EPA Administrative Order on Consent, dated September 2001. The initial field investigation was completed in the fall 2004 and a Preliminary Site Characterization Summary (PSCS) report was submitted to EPA in April 2005. A supplemental field investigation was conducted in the summer 2005 to characterize the mine rock piles located along State Highway 38 (known as the Front Rock Piles). Additionally, EPA tested several private water wells and *acequia* (irrigation) ditches at the request of Questa residents in August 2005. In December 2005, at the request of the village of Questa, five additional ground-water monitoring wells were installed along the eastern boundary of the tailings ponds to determine whether tailings seepage adversely impacted ground water in the area. The EPA is currently performing the human health and ecological baseline risk assessments. The EPA has completed two Risk Assessment (RA) Memoranda identifying chemicals of potential concern (COPCs), exposure areas, and COPC toxicity values. A third RA Memorandum is being prepared on exposure point concentrations and a conceptual site exposure model. The EPA held a community open house in Questa in June 2005 to present an update of the RI status. The EPA also held a Questa Community Coalition meeting on September 14, 2005 to discuss the data generated during the field investigation. The most recent community fact sheet prepared by EPA was on the results of the residential garden sampling, dated August 2005.

Benefits

The completion of the RI/FS and risk assessments will allow EPA to select a remedy to mitigate threats to public health and the environment from the release or potential release of contamination at or from the Site.

National Priorities Listing (NPL) History

Site Hazard Ranking System Score: 50
Proposed Date: 5/11/00
Final Date:

Site Description

Location: The mine site is located 4 miles east of Questa, Taos County, New Mexico. The tailings ponds are located 1 mile west of Questa.

Population: An estimated 1,100 people live within a mile of the tailings ponds. The permanent population within one mile of the mine site is limited to the owners of a small resort and the owners of a few small cabins.

Setting: The Site consists of a active molybdenum mine and milling facility on three square miles of land owned by MolyCorp in the Sangre De Cristo Mountains. It also includes a tailings disposal site (tailings ponds) on approximately one square mile of land owned by

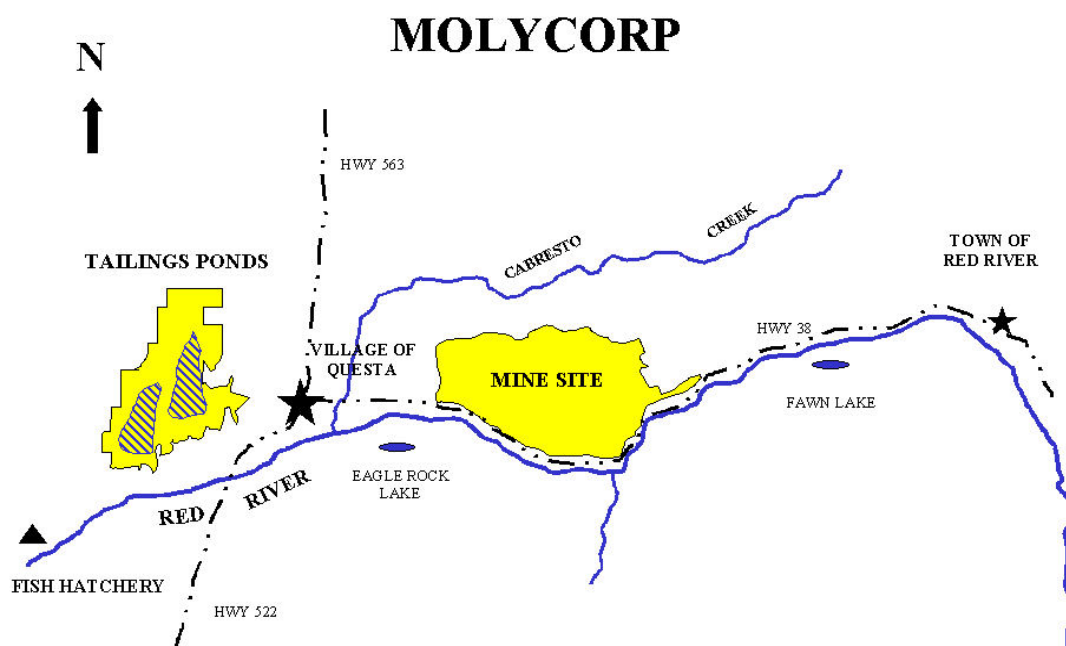
Molycorp and a nine-mile long tailings pipeline running along State Highway 38 from the milling facility to the tailings ponds. The mine and tailings ponds are bounded to the south by the Red River, a tributary of the Rio Grande. The Red River is home to a State fish hatchery 2 miles downstream of the tailings ponds and is designated as a Wild and Scenic River in the vicinity of its confluence with the Rio Grande. Over the years numerous breaks in the pipeline resulted in the spilling of tailings into and along the flood plain of the Red River, threatening the fishery and nearby endangered species habitats. Additional threats to ground water and surface water include seepage from the tailings ponds and acidic metal-laden water generated from the weathering of the waste rock piles (referred to as acid rock drainage or ARD) at the mine site. COPCs include aluminum, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, fluoride, iron, lead, manganese, molybdenum, sulfate and zinc.

Hydrogeology: Mine Site — Contaminated ground water within side drainage basins flow into the Red River alluvial aquifer. Some of the ground water within the alluvial aquifer flows into the Red River as seeps and springs at zones of upwelling. Acidic, metal laden seepage at the toe of the Capulin and Goat Hill North rock piles is captured and directed to the underground mine workings. The dewatering of the underground mine workings has created a zone of capture for the deep bedrock ground water. Molycorp uses water collected from the underground workings and the alluvial aquifer (via pumping wells) for production water in its milling operations.

Tailings Ponds — Ground water is present beneath the tailings ponds in an upper alluvial aquifer and a basal volcanic aquifer. Saturation of the tailings has created a partial mounding of ground water beneath the ponds. Seepage from the tailings ponds has moved both downward into the underlying aquifers and laterally to ground surface as seeps. Seepage is also captured by collection systems and discharged to the Red River via a permitted outfall (002 Outfall).

Principal Pollutants: Heavy metals, including arsenic, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, fluoride, lead, manganese, molybdenum, and zinc.

Site Map



Contacts

EPA Remedial Project Manager:	Mark Purcell	214.665.6707
EPA Community Involvement Coordinator:	Beverly Negri	214.665.8157
EPA Attorney:	James Bove	214.665.2794
EPA Region Ombudsman:	Arnold Ondarza	214.665.8454
EPA State Coordinator:	Kathy Gibson	214.665.7196
New Mexico Environment Department:	Mike Reed	505.827.2340
EPA Region 6 Superfund Toll Free Number:		800.533.3508
Prime Contractor:	CDM Federal Programs Corporation	